

A NEWCOMER'S GUIDE TO MOTORING IN *North Carolina*



Welcome to North Carolina

We are pleased you have become a resident of North Carolina. The N.C. Department of Transportation's Division of Motor Vehicles has developed this guide to help make your transition to the state as smooth and pleasant as possible.

Inside you will find information about obtaining a North Carolina driver license, title and registration. Also included is information about vehicle safety inspections, financial responsibility and motor vehicle laws.

We hope this information is helpful as you make your transition to your new home. More information about DMV's services can be found on its Website at www.ncdot.org/dmv.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lyndo Tippet", written in a cursive style.

Lyndo Tippet
Secretary of Transportation

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DMV *directAccess*

DMV *directAccess* is a convenient way to obtain information about DMV. Customers can dial (919) 715-7000, to access information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

DMV *directAccess* includes information about driver license and vehicle registration taxes and fees. By entering your zip code the system can give you the location of driver license or vehicle registration offices in your area. Have your North Carolina driver license number or your customer number available during the call. DMV *directAccess* gives the facts about:

- driver licenses, learner permits, motorcycle license endorsements, commercial driver licenses and special identification cards;
- personalized information you should know about points against your driver license, your driving record and the status of your driver license;
- vehicle registration, duplicate titles, lost or stolen license plates, personalized or vanity license plates and handicapped placards;
- liability insurance requirements and more.

Did You Know?

- there are more than eight million motor vehicles registered in North Carolina.
- there are more than six million licensed drivers in North Carolina.

Click@DMV

Obtaining the following services online can be as easy as 1-2-3. Go to www.ncdot.org/dmv and select from the following list found in the Click@DMV box on the left side of your screen.

- Registration Renewal (Vehicle License Plate Renewal)
- Duplicate Registration (Card)
- Specialized Plates
- Personalized Plates
- Duplicate License

- Duplicate ID Card
- Liability Insurance Form (FS-5/7)
- Liability Insurance
- IRP Renewal

Getting Your Driver License

All new residents of North Carolina who plan to operate a motor vehicle in this state must obtain a driver license within 60 days of establishing a permanent residence. A person holding a commercial drivers license, issued by another jurisdiction, must apply for a transfer and obtain a North Carolina issued commercial drivers license within 30 days of becoming a resident. To apply, you must appear in person at one of the state's driver license offices and take the required tests.

Appointments for testing may be made by telephoning the driver license office of your choice. Be considerate of others. If you are unable to keep the appointment, please notify the driver license office in advance. When you are issued a North Carolina license, the driver license from your prior state of residence must be surrendered to the driver license examiner.

Motor vehicle laws vary from state to state. Therefore, you are encouraged to become familiar with North Carolina's license requirements and traffic laws by reading the DMV Driver Handbook, a study guide that will familiarize you with the driving rules of the state. The DMV Driver Handbook is available online, at all driver license offices or you can write the DMV Driver License Section, Correspondence Unit, 3114 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-3114.

Types Of Licenses

North Carolina has a regular licensing system and a commercial driver license (CDL). The type of vehicle being operated determines the class of license that is appropriate. A driving skills test may be required in a vehicle that is representative of the license desired.

Regular Driver License

Class A: Any combination of vehicles exempt from CDL requirements with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 pounds or more, provided the GVWR of the vehicle(s) being towed is greater than 10,000 pounds.

Also required for combination vehicles with GVWR of less than 26,001 pounds, if the vehicle being towed has a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds.

Class B: Any single vehicle with a GVWR of 26,001 pounds or more that is exempt from CDL requirements, and any such vehicle while towing another vehicle that has a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or less.

Class C: Any vehicle with a GVWR of 26,000 pounds or less that is exempt from CDL requirements and is not towing a vehicle with a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds.

Most drivers need only a Regular Class C license to operate personal automobiles and small trucks.

Commercial Driver License

A CDL is required of drivers, paid or volunteer, who drive vehicles that are designed or used to transport passengers or property.

Class A Motor Vehicle: A vehicle that has a combined GVWR of at least 26,001 pounds and includes as part of the combination a towed unit that has a GVWR of at least 10,001 pounds.

Class B Motor Vehicle:

- a. A single motor vehicle that has a GVWR of at least 26,001 pounds.
- b. A combination of motor vehicles that includes as part of the combination a towing unit that has a GVWR of at least 26,001 pounds and a towed unit that has a GVWR of less than 10,001 pounds.

Class C Motor Vehicle: A single or combination of motor vehicles not included in Class A or B but meets either of the following descriptions:

1. Is designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver.
2. Is transporting hazardous materials and is required to be placarded.

You do not need a CDL to drive recreational vehicles, military equipment, fire and/or emergency equipment or certain farm vehicles. However, a regular license of the appropriate class is always required.

A special CDL endorsement is required to haul hazardous materials, transport passengers, pull double trailers, drive tank vehicles or drive school buses.

Additional information about CDLs is in the Commercial Driver License Handbook and on the Web at www.ncdot.org/dmv/driver_services/.

Taking the Required Test

A new state resident applying for a driver license must successfully complete the required written, road sign recognition and vision tests. New residents that hold a valid license from their previous state of residence are usually exempt from the driving skills test when applying for a Class C license; however, this is discretionary.

The driving skills test must be taken in the type of vehicle for which the license is issued. An individual required to take the driving skills test must furnish the vehicle for testing purposes.

Liability Insurance

The N.C. General Assembly has enacted legislation to require some (but not all) driver license applicants in North Carolina to submit proof of automobile liability insurance coverage in order to obtain a North Carolina driver license. Proof of liability insurance coverage applies to those:

- applying for an original license, including transfers from out-of-state;
- whose licenses are being restored after revocation or suspension; or
- awarded a Limited Driving Privilege license by the court.

Certification of liability insurance coverage must be submitted on DMV Driver License Liability Insurance Certification Form (Form DL-123), or an original liability insurance policy, binder or certificate of insurance.

These documents must show:

- applicant's name;
- effective date of policy;
- expiration date; and
- date the policy was issued.

Form DL-123 binders and certificates are valid only for 30 days from the date of issuance and must be from an insurance company licensed to do business in North Carolina.

Individuals covered by the required liability insurance law, but who do not own or operate a currently registered motor vehicle will be required to sign a certification of exemption (Liability Insurance Statement or DL-123A) at the driver license office. The exemption restricts the driver to the operation of "Fleet Vehicles Only." To remove the restriction, the driver must pay a \$10 fee and submit DMV Form DL-123.

If you must show proof of financial responsibility, and to avoid inconveniences at the driver license office, obtain Form DL-123 from your insurance agent before you apply for a North Carolina driver license.

Applicants Under Age 18

North Carolina has enacted a Graduated Driver License law that affects persons under age 18. It consists of three levels: Limited Learner Permit, Limited Provisional License and Full Provisional License.

Limited Learner Permit (Level 1)

If you are at least 15 years of age and have completed an approved driver education course, you may apply for a Level One Limited Learner Permit to operate vehicles requiring a Class C License.

- You must be a resident of North Carolina.
- You must have a Driving Eligibility Certificate.
- You must be at least 15 years old but less than 18 years old.
- You must pass the written, signs and vision tests.
- All passengers must be restrained by seatbelt or age/weight appropriate child safety seats.
- No one except the driver and the supervising driver are allowed in the front seat.

- Use of a mobile telephone or other additional technology associated with a mobile telephone while operating a motor vehicle on a public street, highway or public vehicular area is prohibited.

Exceptions: You may use a mobile telephone to call the following regarding an emergency situation: an emergency response operator, a hospital, a physician's office, a health clinic, a public or privately owned ambulance company or service, a fire department or a law enforcement agency. You may also use a mobile telephone to call your parent, legal guardian or spouse.

- During the first six months, a Level 1 permit authorizes you to drive between the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. while accompanied by your supervising driver.
- Six months from Level 1 issuance, you are eligible to drive anytime with your supervising driver.

NOTE: Before graduating to Level 2, you must keep this permit for at least 12 months and have no convictions of motor vehicle moving violations, seat belt or mobile telephone infractions within the preceding six months.

Limited Provisional License (Level 2)

- You must be a resident of North Carolina.
- You must have a Driving Eligibility Certificate.
- Drivers must be at least 16 years old, but less than 18.
- All passengers must be restrained by seat belt or age/weight appropriate child safety seats.
- Supervising driver must be seated beside the driver.
- You may drive without supervision from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. and at any time when driving directly to or from work or any volunteer fire, rescue or EMS (emergency medical service) if you are a member.
- The number of passengers under age 21 is restricted to one. If the supervising driver is in the car, this restriction does not apply. If all passengers under the age of 21 are members of the driver's immediate family or members of the same household as the driver, there is no under 21 limit.

- Use of a mobile telephone or other additional technology associated with a mobile telephone while operating a motor vehicle on a public street, highway or public vehicular area is prohibited.

Exceptions: *You may use a mobile telephone to call the following regarding an emergency situation: an emergency response operator, a hospital, a physician's office, a health clinic, a public or privately owned ambulance company or service, a fire department or a law enforcement agency. You may also use a mobile telephone to call your parent, legal guardian or spouse.*

NOTE: *Before graduating to Level 3, you must keep this license for at least six months and have no convictions of motor vehicle moving violations, seat belt or mobile telephone infractions in the preceding six months.*

Full Provisional License (Level 3)

- You must be a resident of North Carolina.
- You must have a Driving Eligibility Certificate.
- All passengers must be restrained by seat belt or age/weight appropriate child safety seats.
- Use of a mobile telephone or other additional technology associated with a mobile telephone while operating a motor vehicle on a public street, highway or public vehicular area is prohibited. This applies only if the driver is less than 18 years of age.

Exceptions *You may use a mobile telephone to call the following regarding an emergency situation: an emergency response operator, a hospital, a physician's office, a health clinic, a public or privately owned ambulance company or service, a fire department or a law enforcement agency. You may also use a mobile telephone to call your parent, legal guardian or spouse.*

The Provisional Licensee

Drivers under age 18 are provisional licensees. Because these drivers have a much higher crash rate, special laws apply to them. If you are a driver under age 18:

- You must present a certificate showing you have passed an approved driver education course, consisting of at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and six hours behind the wheel instruction, before you can take the driver license or permit test.
- You must also present a Driving Eligibility Certificate, high school diploma or equivalent.
- The DMV reviews your driving record more closely and may contact you if you have certain types of traffic violations or crashes.
- It is unlawful for a provisional licensee to drive a motor vehicle after or while consuming alcohol or drugs – a conviction of such a violation will result in a license revocation period of one year.
- If moving from another state, the supervising driver must be able to certify to at least five years licensed driving experience.
- A parent or legal guardian must sign for a minor.

Thinking Of Dropping Out of High School?

Driver license applicants less than 18 years old must have a Driving Eligibility Certificate, high school diploma or its equivalent to be eligible for a North Carolina driving permit or license. The driving eligibility certificate must be signed by the applicant's school administrator who certifies that the applicant is currently enrolled in school and making progress toward a high school diploma or that substantial hardship would be placed on the applicant or the applicant's family if he or she does not receive a driver license.

DMV must revoke the driver license of any person under age 18 when it receives notice from the proper school authority that the person is no longer eligible for a driving eligibility certificate. This revocation remains in effect until the person's 18th birthday or until eligibility requirements are met.

Lose Control-Lose Your License

A loss of license will occur if a student receives a suspension for more than 10 consecutive days or receives an assignment to an alternative educational setting due to disciplinary action for more than 10 consecutive days.

Driver License Restrictions

An individual's driving privilege may be restricted in the event they have a physical or mental condition that might keep them from driving safely. One of the most common restrictions deals with the use of prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses while driving.

If you are unable to meet the minimum visual acuity standard with or without glasses or contact lenses, you will be referred to your vision specialist. If you are unable to meet this standard with the use of each eye separately, you will be referred to your vision specialist. If corrective lenses are prescribed by your physician, you will be restricted to wearing them during the operation of a motor vehicle.

Restricted licenses and/or more frequent evaluations are imposed in the interest of the individual's own safety, as well as the safety of others. A person with a progressive eye disease and/or another physical or mental condition that could impair their driving should consult their personal doctor regularly and follow their recommendations and professional advice.

Proof Of Age And Identity

Individuals who are 18 years of age or older can apply for any type of North Carolina driver license and/or motorcycle endorsement. There may be additional requirements for individuals applying for a CDL. Please refer to the CDL Handbook.

DMV requires proof of your full name, and age. You must also present your social security card, or a documentation issued by a United States government agency indicating legal presence. In order to prove your age, please present a valid or expired photo driver license, or special identification card issued by the NCDOT Division of Motor Vehicles.

If you do not have any of these, you may present two documents, one of which must show the date of birth. These two documents should come from the following categories: (The two forms of identification cannot come from the same category.)

- Driver License or state-issued Identification Card from another state, Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, or a Canadian province.
- Certified birth certificate issued by a government agency in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, Canada or U.S. Report of Consular Birth Abroad.
- Original Social Security card (not a metal, plastic card or laminated card, or other reproductions);
- Official North Carolina school registration records signed by a school official and diplomas or General Educational Development certificates issued by North Carolina schools, including secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities.
- Unexpired U.S. military identification, including DD-2, DD-214, Common Access Card and U.S. Military Dependents Card.
- Valid, unexpired passport from any nation.
- Certified marriage certificate from a Register of Deeds or appropriate government agency in the United States, Puerto Rico, U.S. territories or Canada.
- Limited Driving Privilege issued by the court and not expired more than one year.
- Valid, unexpired documents issued by the U.S. Bureau of Immigration Services (BIS) formerly known as Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS).
- Court document from U.S. jurisdiction, Puerto Rico, U.S. territories or Canada.
- U.S. Veterans Universal Access Card.

For an applicant under 18 years of age, the application for a learner's permit or driver license must be signed by a parent or legal guardian.

Social Security Number Requirement

When applying for an original identification card, learner permit or driver license it is required that you provide DMV with a valid Social Security card, or documentation issued by a U.S. government agency indicating legal presence.

By law, the DMV is not allowed to disclose a Social Security number for any purpose other than administering driver licensing laws. The SSN on a driver license application will be kept confidential and will not be printed on your driver license. It will only be disclosed as follows:

- For the purpose of administering the drivers license laws.
- To the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Program for the purpose of establishing paternity or child support or enforcing a child support order.
- To the N.C. Department of Revenue for the purpose of verifying taxpayer identity.
- To the Office of Indigent Defense Services of the Judicial Department for the purpose of verifying the identity of a represented client and enforcing a court order to pay for the legal services rendered.

Residency Requirement

For the first-time issuance of a North Carolina Identification card, learner permit or driver license, proof of residency is required which must include name and current North Carolina residence address. This is in addition to proof of age and identity requirements.

Duplicate Licenses/ Duplicate Identification Cards

If you have been issued a North Carolina Driver License/Identification Card and your photo and Social Security number or legal presence document issued by a U.S. government agency are on file, you may apply for a duplicate online. If your driver license, learner permit or identification card was lost/stolen or you have a change of address, visit the Web site at

www.ncdot.org/dmv and go to Click@DMV.

If you change your name or address, you must obtain a duplicate license/duplicate identification card within 60 days. If you have a name change, you must visit a driver license office. A lost or stolen license must be replaced immediately. The cost of a duplicate license/identification card is \$10. You may apply for these at any driver license office. To replace a lost or stolen license/identification card you must show two acceptable forms of identification and proof of Social Security number or a document issued by a U.S. government agency indicating legal presence.

Temporary Residents

Out-of-state students who are at least age 16 and enrolled full-time in an accredited North Carolina school are permitted to drive with their valid home-state driver license and vehicle tags. Active-duty members of the armed forces stationed in North Carolina, as well as their spouses who are non-residents of the state, may drive in North Carolina with their valid home-state driver license and license plates.

Any other person who resides within this state for other than a temporary or transitory purpose for more than six months shall be presumed to be a resident of this state.

Driver License Points

Conviction of a moving traffic violation in North Carolina will result in the assignment of penalty points against your driving record. These points are assigned by the DMV, as required by law, and are based on the severity of the violation. The DMV has the authority to suspend your driver license if you accumulate 12 points within three years. Accumulation of eight or more points within a three-year period following reinstatement may result in a second suspension. When your privilege is reinstated, all previous driver license points are canceled.

Any person who commits an offense for which points may be assessed for violations while operating a commercial motor vehicle will be assessed a higher number of points per violation.

Schedule of Fees	Regular	CDL
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Original License, Renewal, Reissuance

Application Fee	N/A	\$30
Class A	\$4/yr.*	\$15/yr.*
Class B	\$4/yr.*	\$15/yr.*
Class C	\$4/yr.*	\$15/yr.*
Motorcycle Endorsement (with regular issuance)	\$1.75/yr.*	\$1.75/yr.*
CDL Endorsements	N/A	\$3/yr.*
Duplicate License	\$10	\$10

Permits and Other Fees

Learner Permit	\$15	\$15
Motorcycle Learner Permit	\$15	\$15
Duplicate	\$10	\$10
Special Identification Card	\$10	
Restoration Fee	\$50	
Driving Clinic Fee	\$50	
Service Fee	\$50	
DWI Restoration Fee	\$75	

Graduated Licensing

Limited Learner Permit (Level 1)	\$15	N/A
Limited Provisional License (Level 2)	\$15	N/A
Full Provisional License (Level 3)	\$4/yr.*	N/A
Duplicate	\$10	N/A

* Your license will be issued for a period of four to eight years depending on your age. The cost of your license and any endorsements will be computed based on the yearly charge.

Duration Of License

Your driver license will expire on your birthday. Depending upon your age at the time of issuance, your driver license will be valid for the duration as shown below:

Age at time of issuance	Duration
16	5 years
17	4 years
18-53	8 years
54 & older	5 years

Driver Insurance Points

Insurance companies use a separate point system to determine insurance rates. Insurance points can result in substantial premium increases, depending upon the number of points assessed. In addition to the premium increase, a “recoupment surcharge” is added to the cost to determine the final premium.

Tips For Quicker Service When Applying For Your Driver License

- Telephone in advance and make an appointment for testing before you visit your nearest Driver License Office. This will minimize the time required to complete your application. Be sure to cancel the appointment if it cannot be kept.
- Study the Driver Handbook thoroughly before you take the knowledge examination. This will help you avoid a second trip to the Driver License Office.
- Have a valid driver license or a driver license not expired more than one year from your prior state of residence, along with another form of acceptable identification to show the driver license examiner. If this is not possible, bring two other forms of acceptable identification.
- Be able to provide your Social Security card or documentation issued by a U.S. government agency indicating legal presence when you apply for your driver license.

- If applicable, obtain Form DL-123 (Driver License Liability Insurance Certification), or other acceptable proof of liability insurance coverage prior to visiting the driver license office. The insurance company must be licensed to do business in North Carolina. You must show proof of financial/responsibility or be restricted to the operation of fleet vehicles only.
- Be able to provide proof of residency.
- Do not wait until the last minute to visit a driver license office. Allow plenty of time for testing or in the event you must return later for re-examination.
- Have the appropriate type of vehicle available in case you are required to take the driving skills test.

Registering Your Vehicle

Upon moving to North Carolina from out of state, you must register your motor vehicle at the expiration of the time granted by reciprocity agreement between North Carolina and your prior state of residence (usually 30 days) or when gainful employment is accepted, whichever occurs first. Out-of-state residents moving to North Carolina must obtain a North Carolina driver license or special identification card prior to registering a vehicle.

To register your motor vehicle, you must furnish the DMV the title (unless title is in the possession of a lien holder) and a valid registration card from the state of prior registration.

All new residents of the state must pay a title fee of \$40 and a registration fee of \$28 for private passenger automobiles to obtain a license plate and validation decals. License plate fees for other types of vehicles are based upon plate classification.

Residents applying for title and license in Wake, Durham and Orange counties must pay an additional \$5 for funding of the Regional Transportation Authority (General Statute 20-97).

The additional \$5 fee is due on the following classifications:

- Private Passenger Vehicles
- Private Motorcycles
- U-Drive It Passenger Vehicles
- Limousine Vehicles
- Common Carriers, Contract Carriers
- Exempt For-Hire Passenger Carrier Vehicles
- Property Hauling (farm vehicles)
- Manufacturer & Motor Vehicle Dealers

When registering a vehicle and the title is held by a lienholder (usually a bank or finance company), you must furnish the lienholder's name and address. The DMV will provide a form to be mailed to the lienholder requesting release of the title for North Carolina registration purposes. All liens must be declared in the order of their priority.

After registering your vehicle and paying the appropriate fees at any license plate agency, you will be assisted in applying for a certificate of title, registration plate (validation stickers showing month and year of expiration) and a registration card. The registration card must be signed and carried in the vehicle at all times. License plates must be displayed as required by law.

For vehicle registration purposes, state law requires you to furnish the DMV your physical residence address. You may also use a post office box address in addition to the physical location of your residence if you wish to receive mail at a post office box.

You will be unable to obtain a license plate unless you certify to the DMV that your vehicle is covered by liability insurance, cash or bond deposited with the State Treasurer or a certificate of self-insurance. The minimum amount of liability insurance required is \$30,000 for injury to or death of one person, \$60,000 for injury to or death of two or more persons and \$25,000 because of injury to or destruction of property of others in any one accident.

License plates are the property of the DMV and not the owner of the vehicle. They are issued for a full 12-month period and are only valid as long as the registration

remains current and continuous liability insurance coverage is in effect.

Registration must be renewed annually. License plates cannot be transferred from one owner to another. However, plates may be transferred among vehicles under the same ownership upon application and the payment of a \$15 fee. If your license plate is lost or stolen, a replacement plate must be obtained for a fee of \$15. The fee for a duplicate registration card is \$15.

Highway Use Tax

North Carolina collects a 3 percent Highway Use Tax on vehicles in lieu of a state sales tax (G.S. 105-187.2). The tax is assessed each time a title is transferred. The maximum tax for commercial vehicles (vehicles with a weight greater than 26,000 pounds) is \$1,000. All other vehicles are charged 3 percent with no ceiling.

If the vehicle is purchased from a dealer or a leasing company, the tax is 3 percent of the purchase price, less any trade in credit. A bill of sale must accompany each application. Vehicles purchased from anyone other than a dealer must pay a 3 percent tax based on the vehicle's value according to a value table maintained by the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles.

Military personnel (residents and non-residents) registering a vehicle in North Carolina are not exempt from paying the Highway Use Tax.

Out-of-State Residents moving to North Carolina pay tax according to the value table up to a maximum of \$150. If a sales or use tax was paid to a taxing jurisdiction outside North Carolina within 90 days of titling the vehicle in North Carolina, credit will be allowed for the tax paid upon presentation of proof of payment. If the same owner previously titled the vehicle in North Carolina, and that owner re-titles in North Carolina within one year of the original payment of tax, credit will be given for the original amount of tax paid.

Mobile homes sold by a dealer are subject to a 2 percent sales tax with a \$300 maximum. The sales tax is due on each section of a double-wide mobile home. The sales tax is paid to the dealer who then reports it to the Department of Revenue. If the mobile home is purchased from an individual or someone other than a dealer, no tax is due.

Special Mobile Equipment is subject to a 6 percent sales tax with no maximum if purchased from a person or firm engaged in the business of selling, leasing or renting special mobile equipment. Credit for a trade-in is not allowed on the purchase price.

Exemptions from Highway Use Tax (G.S. 105-187.6)

- An insurance company obtaining a salvage title for a vehicle for which a total loss claim was paid;
- When transferring a title to a manufacturer or retailer for the purpose of resale;
- When making a name change or name correction to a title;
- If the vehicle is transferred by a will or intestacy;
- If the vehicle is a gift between a husband and wife, a parent and child or a stepparent and stepchild;
- If the vehicle is transferred as a result of the distribution of marital or divisible property incident to a marital separation or divorce;
- To a handicapped person from the Department of Health and Human Services after the vehicle has been equipped by the department for use by the handicapped; and
- To a local board of education for use in the driver education program of a public school; when the vehicle is transferred by a retailer and is to be transferred back to the retailer within 300 days after the transfer or transferred by a local board of education.

Property Tax Law

The property tax system requires counties to assess the value of motor vehicles registered with DMV and prepare tax bills. Three months after your registration renewal date, you will receive a tax bill which is payable on the first day of the following month.

The property tax law calls for counties to charge interest for overdue accounts. Legislation now allows counties to block the renewal of a license plate if the owner owes an overdue property tax.

A county tax collector can place a “block” on the registration of a vehicle that is at least four months overdue, and exceeds \$5. If a county places a “block” on

the registration, DMV is unable to renew the license plate on that vehicle until the owner presents DMV with a standardized paid tax receipt.

DMV is not involved in establishing the value of a vehicle for property tax purposes. It furnishes a record of the make and model of the registered vehicle and the local county assessment office determines the tax accordingly.

Personalized License Plates

Personalized license plates are available for passenger automobiles, motorcycles, trailers and private and commercial trucks. You must pay the regular license fee (\$28 for automobiles, \$18 for motorcycles and \$28 for trucks limited to 4,000 pounds) plus an additional \$30 personalized license plate fee.

Application for personalized license plates may be submitted any time during the year. However, a license plate may have to be issued while the personalized license plate is being manufactured.

A personalized license plate choice may be selected from letter, number and character combinations not exceeding eight spaces (seven-digit limit on motorcycles). The ampersand (&), question mark (?), dollar sign (\$), equal sign (=), number sign (#), plus sign (+), slant (/), asterisk (*), single quotes (") and the at sign (@) each count as one space (the at sign (@) is not available for motorcycles). The period (.), apostrophe ('), exclamation point (!), dash (-) comma (,), and colon (:) each count as 1/2 space. Double quotes ("") count as two spaces. Words and letter combinations that are considered offensive and in poor taste are not allowed.

Handicap License Plates

License plates are issued through the DMV Headquarters in Raleigh. Application for Handicap Drivers Registration Plate (Form MVR-37) is required and must be signed by a physician. The fee is \$28 annually.

Handicap placards (temporary or five year) are available at license plate agencies across North Carolina. An Application for Temporary Handicap Placards (Form MVR-37 A or MVR-37 F) is required and must be signed by a physician. The placard fee is \$5 each.

Vehicle Safety Inspection

A North Carolina vehicle safety inspection is required within 10 days of receiving a North Carolina license plate or by the last day of the month printed on the inspection sticker. All vehicles 35 years old or older are exempt from the North Carolina vehicle safety inspection. The cost of the safety inspection is \$9.10. The vehicle inspection can be performed at any of the 4,000 licensed inspection stations throughout the state. Most service stations, automobile dealerships and vehicle repair garages are licensed inspection stations. If a vehicle fails the safety inspection, it cannot be operated beyond the expiration date of the current sticker. However, the owner has 30 days to correct any safety defects and qualify for re-inspection at no additional cost, provided the owner presents a receipt of the initial inspection.

On-Board Diagnostic Emissions Inspection

As a tool for fighting ozone-forming emissions from gasoline-operated cars and light-duty trucks, legislation approved by the N.C. General Assembly calls for licensed inspection stations to use a more effective method for testing the air-pollution controls on cars and trucks. It requires them to conduct inspections using the vehicle's on-board diagnostic (OBD) system, or computerized equipment installed on all vehicles manufactured since 1996. Diesel-operated vehicles are exempt from the annual safety/emission inspection.

As of January 2006, safety/OBD inspections are required in 48 counties: Alamance, Brunswick, Buncombe, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Carteret, Catawba, Chatham, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Davidson, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Franklin, Gaston, Granville, Guilford, Harnett, Haywood, Henderson, Iredell, Johnston, Lee, Lenoir, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Moore, Nash, New Hanover, Onslow, Orange, Pitt, Randolph, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Rutherford, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Union, Wake, Wayne, Wilkes, and Wilson.

If a vehicle does not pass, it will need to be repaired and re-tested. The vehicle owner will receive one free re-test

if he returns to the original inspection station within 30 days of the initial inspection. Before going anywhere for repairs, check to see if the vehicle is still covered by a manufacturer's emission control warranty. If so, take it to an authorized dealer.

Under General Statute 20-183.8A, if a vehicle fails to pass a Safety & Emissions Inspection within four months of the expiration of the existing inspection sticker, the vehicle owner will receive a civil penalty and will be unable to renew the registration until the vehicle passes an emission inspection.

You will receive only one official warning letter through the mail within a four-month period before the Penalty & Registration Block is actually issued. However, if you are stopped by a law enforcement officer, you are subject to be cited with a traffic ticket at any time while you are driving the vehicle with an expired Safety & Emissions sticker. The owner could be fined with a penalty up to \$250 and not be allowed to renew the registration until the vehicle passes the OBD emissions test.

Cost for an Emissions or Safety Inspection

If your vehicle is registered in one of the 48 emission counties, the total cost of the passed emission inspection is \$30: \$23.50 for the safety/emissions inspection and \$6.50 for the sticker fee. A "safety only" inspection in a non-emission county, or for a vehicle older than a 1996 model year in an emission county is \$9.10: \$8.25 for the safety inspection and \$.85 for the sticker fee.

Inspection Locations

You can go to any properly licensed and equipped safety/emissions station to receive the inspection required for your particular vehicle and the sticker showing your vehicle has been inspected. Because inspection stations are privately owned facilities and North Carolina's Inspection and Maintenance Program operates within a decentralized network, it is not mandatory for a station to be OBD-licensed or equipped. However, a station or mechanic can only perform the type of emission test for which they are certified (e.g., Safety, Safety/OBD). A list of inspection stations by county can be found online at www.ncdot.org/dmv, Click@DMV, click on "Vehicle

Services,” click on “Emissions & Inspection: /Emissions Inspection Locations.”

Window-Tinting

Vehicles with after-factory window tinting must pass the 35 percent visible light requirement during an annual vehicle safety inspection.

In addition to the annual safety inspection fee, there is a \$10 charge for any vehicle that has an after-factory tint. If you have any questions about window tinting, contact your nearest DMV License & Theft Bureau district office. (See page 31.)

Financial Responsibility

The state of North Carolina began registering vehicles for the first time on July 1, 1909. Since that time, the North Carolina highway system has become the largest state-maintained road system in the nation. The number of uninsured vehicles in the state grew so rapidly that in 1957 North Carolina became one of the first states to adopt a compulsory insurance law.

The Vehicle Financial Responsibility Act of 1957 requires that all motor vehicles registered in the state must be covered by an automobile liability insurance policy and that the insurance must remain in effect with continuous coverage until the registration is terminated.

The insurance must be provided by a company that is licensed to do business in North Carolina. The law is designed to compensate accident victims for property losses and personal injuries and is designed for your protection.

North Carolina’s compulsory insurance law is strictly enforced. If you cancel your insurance, or coverage is discontinued for any reason, your insurance company will notify the DMV that your policy has lapsed.

Upon receipt of this notice, the DMV will mail you a Recertification of Liability Insurance Coverage. Failure to respond to this letter providing requested information within the required time may result in the revocation of your license plate, as provided by law.

To re-license your vehicle after the revocation period, you must pay a \$50 restoration fee, \$50 service fee (if

an enforcement order is issued) and the appropriate fees for a new registration plate. The service fee may be avoided by surrendering your license plate to the DMV during the prescribed period of 15 days following the notice of revocation.

Vehicle Liability Insurance

Do not make the mistake of canceling your vehicle liability insurance coverage before surrendering your license plate to your nearest DMV agency. For example, if you put your vehicle in storage or do not plan to operate it for a long period of time, you must surrender the registration plate to your local license plate agency before canceling your liability insurance coverage.

Therefore, make certain you turn in your license plate first and then cancel your liability insurance coverage. This will help you avoid a civil penalty for failure to maintain continuous insurance coverage. Penalties are \$50 for no previous lapses within three years, \$100 for one previous lapse within the three-year period, and \$150 for two or more previous lapses within three years. North Carolina law requires you to have liability coverage in effect on your vehicle during the entire time it is registered and the license plate is in your possession.

Changing Insurance Companies

The same rule applies to changing your liability insurance coverage from one company to another. To avoid a lapse in coverage, make certain that you purchase your new liability insurance policy before canceling your old one. Purchase coverage before the renewal date rather than going into a policy reinstatement period which creates a lapse in liability coverage. Have your agent notify the DMV that you have changed from one company to another without a termination of coverage.

Operation Of Mopeds

You must be age 16 or older to operate a moped on North Carolina highways or public vehicular areas. A driver license is not required, and the moped does not have to be registered, inspected or covered by liability insurance. A DOT-issued motorcycle safety helmet which complies with FMSVSS218 is required by law to be worn when operating a moped on North Carolina highways. A moped cannot have a motor of more than 50 cubic centimeters, an external shifting device nor have the capability of exceeding 30 miles per hour, on a level surface.

Tips for Quicker Service When Registering Your Vehicle

- When you visit the nearest license plate agency, bring the title of your vehicle (if available) and registration card from your prior state of residence.
- North Carolina is a compulsory liability insurance coverage state. Your insurance company must be licensed to do business in North Carolina. Know the name of your company and your vehicle liability insurance policy number to certify coverage. You cannot register your vehicle without this information.
- It is a good idea to have your vehicle safety inspection as soon as it is registered. An inspection of your vehicle's emissions control system is required in 48 counties.
- You must give your physical residence address for registration. A post office box may be listed as a secondary address for receiving mail.

Important Rules To Remember: North Carolina Traffic Rules

For your convenience, listed are specific traffic rules that apply in North Carolina.

Speed Checking Devices: Electrical, radar and vascar devices are used by the State Highway Patrol, DMV License and Theft Bureau, and local police. Warning signs are posted on main highways.

Child Safety Seats: Mandatory for children less than 8 years of age and less than 80 pounds in weight. In vehicles equipped with an active passenger-side front air bag, if the vehicle has a rear seat, a child less than 5 years of age and less than 40 pounds in weight shall be properly secured in a rear seat, unless the child restraint system is designed for use with air bags. If no seating position equipped with a lap and shoulder belt to properly secure the weight-appropriate child passenger restraint system is available, a child less than 8 years of age and between 40 and 80 pounds may be restrained by a properly fitted lap belt only.

Seatbelts: Mandatory for all passengers.

Hand Signals: Left turn, arm horizontal; right turn, arm upward; and to stop or slow down, arm downward.

School Buses: Color – national school bus glossy yellow. Buses are required to have a mechanical stop arm. Vehicles must stop when meeting or passing a school bus loading or unloading. Vehicles on a divided highway do not have to stop when meeting or passing a school bus that is on the opposite side of the median.

Move Over for Emergency Vehicles: Police cars, ambulances, fire engines and rescue squad vehicles are always entitled to the right of way. The signals will be either flashing lights or sirens. Move over to the farthest lane of travel when approaching any stopped emergency vehicle with its lights flashing, including public service vehicles with amber lights, on a four-lane highway. Motorists should continue traveling in that lane at a reduced speed until clear of the emergency vehicle. If you cannot safely move over, you must reduce speed. If you see or hear an emergency vehicle with flashing lights (head-on or from behind), drive to the right-hand curb or edge of the road and, come to a complete stop.

Fender Bender: If an accident has not resulted in injury or death and occurs in a main travel lane or other highway area and the vehicles involved can be normally and safely driven under their own power without causing additional damage, they should be moved out of the travel lane and onto the shoulder or other designated site as soon as possible.

No Passing Zones: Indicated by solid yellow center line on driver side of highway. Passing must be completed before entering the “No Passing Zone.”

Headlights: Use from sunset to sunrise and when light conditions restrict visibility to 400 feet or less.

Windshield Wipers/Headlights: Motorists are required to use headlights while using windshield wipers during inclement weather.

Dimming of Headlights: Required when approaching a vehicle within 500 feet or following a vehicle within 200 feet.

Windshield Stickers: Prohibited, except those required by law or approved by the DMV.

Parking on Highways: Prohibited.

Right Turn on Red: Permitted after a complete stop, unless otherwise posted.

Left Turn on Red: Not permitted.

Motorcycle Rules

Special Driving Rules: Lights must be on at all times. Driving between lanes is prohibited.

Required Equipment: DOT-issued safety helmet which complies with FMSVSS218, one rear-view mirror, headlight, tail light, stoplight, license plate light and horn.

Driver License: A motorcycle endorsement must be shown on a valid driver license. A Motorcycle Learner Permit is also available.

Moped Rules

Safety Equipment Required: A safety helmet(See page 26). If operated at night, headlight and tail light or reflector and rear-view mirror. If moped is registered it must be inspected, and a horn, brake and license plate lamp are required.

Crash Reports

Accidents involving death, personal injury or property damage of \$1,000 or more must be reported to the nearest law enforcement officer or agency. Failure to make this report may result in prosecution, and/or suspension of your driver license.

Driving While Impaired

In North Carolina, motorists are guilty of Driving While Impaired (DWI) if: (a) their blood alcohol concentration meets or exceeds 0.08 percent or (b) they are under the influence of or affected by alcohol and/or other drugs. Refusal to take a blood or breath test will result in an immediate one-year driver license revocation and an additional one-year revocation if a conviction is received by the DMV. This revocation appears on your driver record.

Alcohol Concentration Restrictions

An alcohol concentration restriction will be required when a license is restored following a suspension for DWI or when a Limited Driving Privilege is issued following a DWI conviction.

On the first restoration, the alcohol concentration restriction will be 0.04. On a second or subsequent restoration, the alcohol concentration restriction will be 0.00. Additionally, if you are convicted of driving while impaired in a commercial motor vehicle, driving after consuming alcohol or drugs while under the age of 21 or felony death by vehicle, the alcohol concentration restriction will be 0.00.

Furthermore, a DWI conviction with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.15 or more or another conviction within the past seven years, will require an ignition interlock device to be installed on the vehicle.

Punishment Can Be Severe

If You Are Convicted of DWI:

There are five possible levels of punishment for DWI. The level of punishment will depend on the number of grossly aggravating factors and mitigating factors found by the court.

The minimum punishment level is Level 5. This level provides for a possible fine of up to \$200 and a possible term of imprisonment ranging from 24 hours to 60 days. The maximum punishment level is Level 1. This level provides for a possible fine of up to \$4,000 and a

possible term of imprisonment ranging from 30 days to two years.

A person convicted of DWI will also have his or her driver license suspended by the Division of Motor Vehicles. The length of the suspension will range from one year to a permanent revocation, depending on the number of prior DWI convictions. A limited driving privilege may be applicable depending on the prior driving history.

A person with prior DWI convictions may also be subject to punishment as a felon. Specifically, a person who commits a DWI offense and has been convicted of DWI three or more times during the preceding seven years may be convicted of habitual impaired driving. This is a felony offense that carries a minimum term of 12 months imprisonment. The person's license will also be permanently revoked.

Youthful Offenders

If a driver under age 21 is convicted for an offense of driving with any amount of alcohol or drug content, the driver license will be revoked for one year. This revocation is in addition to any other punishment authorized by law.

Getting Your License Back

It is extremely difficult and in many cases impossible in North Carolina for a repeat DWI offender to get his/her license back. A repeat offender could wait up to three years or longer before becoming eligible to request a restoration hearing process.

Driver License Offices

To locate the office nearest you, visit our Web site at www.ncdot.org/dmv and click on “Office Locations.” Select “Driver's License & School Bus Offices” and enter the county in which you live to find the nearest office.

License Plate Agencies

To locate the office nearest you, visit our Web site at www.ncdot.org/dmv and click on “Office Locations.” Select “Vehicle & License Plate Renewal Offices” and enter the county in which you live to find the nearest office.

DMV License And Theft Bureau

To locate the office nearest you, visit our Web site at www.ncdot.org/dmv and click on “Office Locations.” Select “License & Theft Bureau District Offices” and enter the county in which you live to find the nearest office.



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